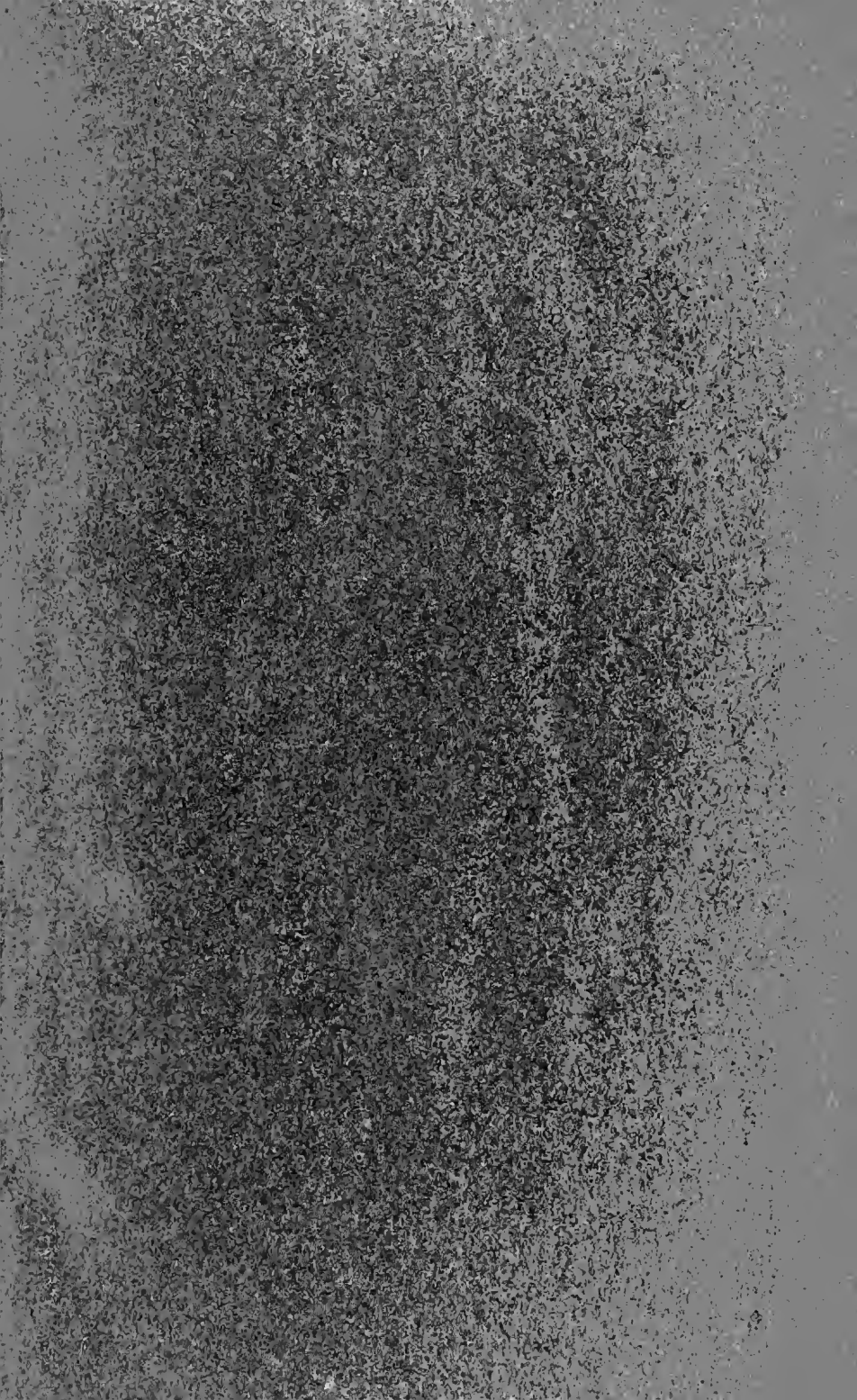


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# THE JAIL BOND ISSUE

TO BE VOTED UPON MONDAY, JUNE 6, 1921

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VOTE NO

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STATEMENT TO THE VOTERS OF COOK COUNTY  
BY THE  
CHICAGO BUREAU OF PUBLIC EFFICIENCY  
315 PLYMOUTH COURT

CHICAGO BUREAU  
OF  
PUBLIC EFFICIENCY

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# THE JAIL BOND ISSUE

TO BE VOTED UPON MONDAY, JUNE 6, 1921

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## *To the Voters of Cook County:*

At the Judicial Election of Monday, June 6, the voters of Cook County will be asked to approve a bond issue of \$9,000,000 for the erection of a new jail and criminal court building, and also to approve an additional annual tax of not to exceed 7 cents on each \$100 of the assessed value of property for a period of 20 years for the payment of principal and interest.

The Chicago Bureau of Public Efficiency believes that the proposition should be defeated.

This is the fourth time in recent years that a jail bond proposition has been submitted. On each of the three previous occasions it has been defeated; the last time in 1917 when the amount asked for was \$3,000,000.

The need for a new jail has been obvious for a number of years. The former bond propositions have been voted down because the County Board failed to present to the people, in advance of the referendum, any well defined project upon which the proceeds of the bonds were to be expended. Notwithstanding these previous experiences, the present Board persists in following the old tactics and is asking for blind authorization to spend \$9,000,000. Not even the Board itself seems to have any clear idea as to how the money is to be used if voted.

In discussing a similar situation in 1917 the Bureau said:

“It was never intended that the referendum on bond issues should be so used. The proper proced-

ure is to outline the features of a project and present it to the public for discussion, with a statement of the reasons in its favor, before ordering a proposition for the issuance of bonds placed upon the ballot. Citizens and citizen organizations should have the opportunity to be heard and to offer suggestions for modifications of a plan before its final formulation. Moral assurance at least should then be given that the plan will be adhered to in its main features in case of approval by the people of the proposition to issue bonds for the purpose."

What was then said applies now with even greater force. The present proposal involves a much larger expenditure and the preliminary discussions of the subject indicate an intention to expand the project to include several important features not heretofore contemplated.

The existing jail and the criminal court building occupy about two-thirds of the block upon which they are situated. The President of the County Board and his associates have proposed in a tentative way that the County acquire the remainder of the block and erect a 14-story building covering the entire property. It is also suggested that the new building might be used not only as a jail and criminal court building, but that it house a central police station, the city detective bureau, and other public and private agencies dealing with crime problems.

These tentative suggestions on the part of board members represent the extent to which the plans have been considered and developed. No adequate inquiry has been made as to the type or size of building needed for jail and court purposes; nor are there any indications that this Board understands better than its predecessors the jail problem of the community. Yet it was the failure of previous Boards to show that they understood this



problem which constituted one of the principal objections to authorizing jail bonds in the past.

Again, although it is now proposed that the new building be erected with the idea that a large part of it will be used by the City of Chicago and other public and private agencies, neither officials of the City, nor of the other agencies, have been consulted as to whether they would participate in such an arrangement, and if so as to what their space and other requirements would be.

Obviously, under such conditions the proposal of the Board for a \$9,000,000 bond issue is not based upon any accurate estimate as to what would be the ultimate cost of the project.

Apparently realizing that an eleventh-hour proposal of this kind, unsupported by any well considered plans, would meet with public criticism, the Board has organized a citizens' committee "to aid in any campaign in behalf of the proposed bond issue, and if it is approved by the people to advise and pass upon all plans and the actual construction of the proposed building."

This sort of camouflage ought not to conceal the real issue from the voters. The people have a right to know with reasonable certainty what is involved in a project for the expenditure of bond money *before they vote upon the proposition.*

One of the principal purposes which the referendum serves is that of requiring officials to formulate programs for proposed expenditures which the public can discuss and upon the basis of which funds may be authorized or withheld. Certainly, the sound principle of public finance which underlies this procedure is not conformed to by attempting to delegate to a citizens' group the opportunity

to advise, or even to decide, with respect to the formulation of a program *after the vote is taken*.

The present County Board has been in office since December, 1918. Several of its members were also members of the Board when the last jail bond issue was defeated. All of them must be fully cognizant of the reasons for that defeat and of the conditions which well informed public opinion demands be met before giving approval to a project of this kind. Yet with jail conditions growing worse the Board has shown no interest in the problem, and has made no attempt either to study or to solve it. Instead of frank and intelligent dealing with the question, there comes a request for authority to spend \$9,000,000 in such ways and on such plans as may later be developed.

In view of this record and attitude of the Board on the subject it may be seriously questioned whether any group of citizens will influence materially the way in which the money is spent if it is authorized. But even if the Board in expending the money should in good faith accept and act upon the advice of the particular group that has been selected (or of any other group or groups) still the objections to the present procedure would not be removed. *The proper time to determine the essential features of a project of this sort and to secure the assistance of citizens and citizen organizations for this purpose is before the proposition is submitted to a vote.*

CHICAGO BUREAU OF PUBLIC EFFICIENCY,

HARRIS S. KEELER,

May 31, 1921.

*Director.*

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VOTE NO

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